

ALPINE LAKES WILDERNESS FOUNDER REMEMBERED AS NEW WILDERNESS PLANS GROW

An hour's drive from Washington's largest population centers, people can park and walk into a 362,789-acre wilderness that spans the crest of the Cascade Range between Snoqualmie and Stevens passes. "This is the crown jewel of natural areas in the Greenway," says Greenway Trust Executive Director Nancy Keith. "Almost all the popular trails on the north side of I-90 – Granite Mountain, Bandera Mountain, Snow Lake, the Kendall Catwalk – lead into the designated Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area that was set aside from logging, mining and the intrusion of machines back in the 1970s."

In recent months, two events have brought new attention to the Wilderness. Representative Dave Reichert has announced plans to sponsor a bill in Congress this Fall to add more US Forest Service land to the wilderness, and the role of the late Congressman Lloyd Meeds in protecting this landscape in the 1970s has been recognized with a new Kiosk at the Snow Lake trailhead, one of the most popular hikes in Greenway high country.

Meeds: Crusader for Two State Wilderness Areas

Representing a district that extended from Bellingham into King County, Congressman Lloyd Meeds saw the pressures on the Cascades mountains and forests well before the 1980s. He championed both the creation of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness and North Cascades National Park.

"Lloyd Meeds was one of many Congressmen and Senators I took into the wilderness," said Nick Busher, retired Forest Service Ranger, "but he was the one who really belonged there, the others were visitors. For Lloyd it was not politics that got Alpine Lakes, it was personal love."

On September 13th, Congressman Norm

Dicks, Meeds' colleague of many years, joined Rep. Rick Larsen, Meeds' successor in Congress and Rep. Dave Reichert in unveiling a memorial poster about Meeds on a new information kiosk at the Snow Lake trailhead near Snoqualmie Pass.

During his tenure in Congress, Meeds also supported Alaska native peoples' land claims and sponsored legislation to create Head Start and the Youth Conservation Corps. He died in 2005 at the age of 77.



*Above: Snow Lake, a hiking destination north of I-90 exit 52.
Right: U.S. Representative Norm Dicks, Mary Meeds, U.S. Representatives Dave Reichert and Rick Larsen unveiled a memorial to the late Congressman Lloyd Meeds in September at the Snow Lake Trailhead.*

Photos courtesy of Phil Fenner.

Wilderness Expansion Project has Two Fronts

The Alpine Lakes Wilderness carved out in the 1970s was confined to higher elevations. Since then, members of the Sierra Club and the non-profit Alpine Lakes Protection Society have continued to work to add the more heavily-forested lower-elevation parcels left out of the original designation. This year Congressman Reichert approached the Sierra Club, ALPS and other groups with a plan to expand the Wilderness by roughly 22,000 acres in some of these low-elevation lands in the Greenway.

Greenway Trust Board and Advisory council members Mark Boyar, Charlie Raines and Rick McGuire have worked on the new Wilderness proposal with Congressman

Reichert.

"There are two key areas," Boyar says. "The heart of the proposal is the Pratt River Valley, which is a tributary of the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River. It's a roadless, low-elevation valley and provides year-around wildlife habitat. Nearby, along the Middle Fork Trail, the proposal would bring the wilderness boundary closer to the trail. Then around on the I-90 side, the proposal would bring the Wilderness designation lower and closer to the trailheads."

The Sierra Club's Charlie Raines says, "Right now, the Forest Service is doing a fine job managing these lands. But logging and mining have been proposed in the past and who knows what kind of policies could come down 10 or 20 years



from now? We should take this opportunity to permanently protect these roadless lands."

The Greenway Trust, in a letter to Congressman Reichert, strongly supported the new Wilderness proposal. "These additions are a good idea," says Keith, "and we also asked Congressman Reichert to support more funding for the US Forest Service so they can effectively maintain trails in the Wilderness and manage the impacts of a growing, recreation-oriented public."

Currently, the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest manages 42% of its land as wilderness. Congressman Reichert introduced the Wilderness Expansion Bill in mid-October.